

Tuesday, January 16th

100 Hours: The new Democratic leadership's "100 Hour" agenda is entering its third and final week. I have been trying, in the spirit of bipartisanship, to find something to like in it. Really. I have. And I found two things. The smoking ban in the area off the House floor really improves the air quality there, and the Monday-Friday voting schedule makes for more orderly votes. But that's it.

The rest of the 100 hour agenda is either unremarkable or awful. Here is some of the bad stuff that passed the in House this week:

- There are several egregious exceptions and loopholes in the new ethics rules banning gifts (the old limit used to be \$50) from lobbyists and lobbyist employers. One exception is that there is NO limit on gifts from Indian Tribes. The original impetus for all of this ethics reform was the Jack Abramoff scandal where members of Congress received gifts from his clients, who were mainly Indian Tribes. So, the Democrats carved out an exception for the very practice that they said caused corruption. Hmm.
- As part of the 9/11 commission bill, the TSA employees that you see at airports would be unionized. That's right. All 46,000 of them. It was brought up during debate that a number of these positions will be eliminated with new automated baggage checking machines. Unionizing the jobs will make it harder to eliminate positions when it becomes safer and cheaper to use automated technology to perform some tasks, but this proposal would make sure that taxpayers don't save any money and that union bosses get their cut.
- Another part of the 9/11 bill allows the United Nations to have access to some of our secret nuclear information. A separate motion to remove this section in the interests of national security failed on a nearly party-line vote.
- The 9/11 bill also called for a number of new security procedures. But it did not include one dollar to pay for any of them. So, this proposal that is popular with the public won't actually happen.
- A minimum wage increase was passed, but just like the ethics rules, there were exceptions to the new minimum wage. It specifically exempts American Samoa where 75% of the workforce are paid an average of \$3.26/hour and are employed by two tuna packing companies based in California. One of them, Del Monte Corp. (StarKist Tuna) is headquartered in San Francisco. Who in Congress represents San Francisco? Speaker Pelosi, of course. However, the bill does apply the minimum wage to another Pacific Island territory, the Northern Mariana Islands where they currently have a \$3.05 minimum wage. Why did Democrats include the Marianas but not Samoa? Hmm? (On a side note, the wage increase would have little effect on California even if it were to become law because it sets the wage at \$1.25 below our current state minimum wage.)

- The worst part of the 100 Hour Agenda, passed last week, was related to the Medicare prescription drug benefit known as Medicare Part D. Under this year-old program, 90% of eligible seniors have enrolled in one of the hundreds of drug plans offered by over 100 suppliers. The benefit was originally projected to cost seniors \$38/month on average, but the operation of market forces have reduced this to \$24/month. Taxpayers have saved \$13 billion because every time the costs go down, taxpayers save on their share of this cost too. Furthermore, because of the competitive market, suppliers are improving benefits, and this year rates are expected to drop to \$22/month. For the socialists reading this, that's called an efficient market, and it works. So what was the 100 Hour solution, a bill that would replace this efficient market with government bureaucrats negotiating the prices? **THIS IS UNCONSCIONABLE!** The new House leadership wants to eliminate a working, efficient, and transparent market; and instead empower the same guys who brought you the \$1000 toilet seat and the \$500 hammer. They want to replace the one part of Medicare that is actually working with the failed procedures of other government programs! It's like instituting a worst-practices program! Or benchmarking to the least efficient producer you can find! It's a solution that won't work for a problem that does not exist. Why does the new leadership want to increase costs on seniors and taxpayers? Because they want government, rather than doctors and patients, to run all of healthcare, regardless of the consequences. This new majority wants socialized medicine, but we will stop it. The Senate is unlikely to pass this bill and the President has said he would veto it.

Why is there so much bad stuff in all of these bills? The supposedly "open" new Congress is actually the most closed Congress in history. When the Contract with America was passed in 1995, Democrats offered 154 amendments to the package of which 48 passed and became law. In the "100 hours", zero amendments have been allowed by to be offered by the minority and therefore zero changes have been made to any of the bills. And Speaker Pelosi promised "partnership not partisanship." Right.

The good news is that little of this agenda will become law. It will be the 100 hours that changed nothing. You will hear more about that when the 100 hours ends later this week.

I remain respectfully,

Congressman John Campbell